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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002522

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SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA REACTION TO ARMENIAN GENOCIDE VOTE

REF: ANKARA 2517

Classified By: AMBASSADR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (c) Turkish MFA U/S Apakan convoked Ambassador October 11 regarding the House Foreign Affairs Committee vote on the Armenian genocide resolution (AGR) the day before. He expressed great appreciation for Administration efforts against the AGR and was well aware of work by the President, Secretaries Rice and Gates, and many other senior officials

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on the issue. Unfortunately, these efforts had not succeeded. The Turkish people view the resolution with sorrow and humiliation. It will not help Turkish-Armenian, Turkish-American or Turkish-Israeli relations. Apakan urged the strongest possible efforts to prevent approval by the full House.

¶2. (c) Apakan deep frustration over remarks made at the HFAC mark-up. For example, Rep. Hoyer had pointed out that the AGR does not directly concern the present government or Turkish nation, but rather their predecessors. However, present-day Turkish citizens could not ignore unjustified accusations against thier parents and grandparents. Rep. Sherman had asserted that Turkey would express its anger for a few days and then get over it. This was incorrect. The real impact of the AGR will not be in angry words or retaliatory measures, but over the medium and longer term in the hearts and minds of Turks. Apakan said that in 10 years time, people may look back and ask, "Who lost Turkey." This resolution will be one of the reasons for it, and that's not the future that he and Turkey's Westernizers want to see.

¶3. (c) Regarding Turkey's possible response, Apakan was measured and mentioned no specifics. He said that of course Turkey will have to react. It will do so with restraint and recognition that we are and will remains allies. He stressed that the MFA and government want to continue close cooperation with the US. The US will, however, see different reactions from different quarters of Turkey (e.g., the military, the street) that the MFA cannot control. The present government is more vulnerable than any of its predecessors to popular, nationalist and military opinion, and this limits its options.

¶4. (c) Ambassador pointed to the heavy engagement by many Administration officials before the vote and the Department's statement afterward. It expresses our regret over the HFAC vote and strong continued opposition to the AGR. Our efforts against it will continue. From the President on down, we continue to believe that this is a matter for historians, and that mutual understanding of the past and reconciliation going forward are key. We also believe Turkey and the US will remain strong partners who need each other and that this should temper how we proceed. Ambassador cautioned against reacting to the HFAC vote as if it were the whole House. While avoiding passage of the AGR will be very difficult, nothing is inevitable in politics, and strident responses that look like threats can make a bad situation worse.

¶5. (c) Comment: Apakan's response was muted and, coming on the heels of his first discussions with FM Babacan since the latter's return from the Middle East, should be regarded as suggesting the MFA and much of the government will seek to retain perspective. Perhaps not the military, which today cancelled senior-level participation in a US-hosted, multinational naval event in coming days. Nor the media, which is coupling coverage of the HFAC vote with lurid pictures of Turkish forces along the border with Iraq) as if pugnaciously to tell angry Turks that the nation's army will go to war with America over the AGR in the PKK's encampments in northern Iraq. The truth is that the government is working to buy time and keep its options open on both the AGR and on the PKK/northern Iraq problem -- for now.

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